

SCHOOL-TO-WORK: PAST AND FUTURE

By Tracy Schmidt

State legislation plays an integral role in school-to-work programs.

State legislation plays an integral role in school-to-work programs across the country. Before the term school-to-work was batted around Capitol Hill and the White House, states like California, Maine, Michigan, Washington and Wisconsin already had elements of school-to-work in their education systems. In fact, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act was inspired by state innovation. Now in anticipation of the sunset of the act, states are trying to find ways to continue this school reform by aligning existing funding.

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have now received federal implementation grants from the National School-to-Work Office of the Departments of Labor and Education. Federal implementation grant money to the first eight states will end in 1999 in anticipation of the law's sunset in 2001. In states where the legislature has made efforts to secure the future of school-to-work, the sunset of the federal law should have little effect on the prognosis for long-term education reform.

To strengthen school-to-work for the future, states have:

- Made the connection between a successful education system and a prepared work force (Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, Wisconsin, West Virginia).
- Infused education reform with such principles as higher standards for all, regular assessments, elimination of tracking, applied learning, integrated curricula, work-

State Statutes Relating to School-to-Work

	Establishes School-to-Work	Youth Apprenticeship	Tax Credit or Exemption	Workers' Compensation
Arkansas		4		
California				
Colorado		4		
Connecticut	4			
Florida	4 *			
Georgia		4		
Hawaii	4		4	4
Iowa	4			4
Kentucky	4			
Maine		4		
Michigan	4		4	
Minnesota	4			
Mississippi	4 *			
Montana				4
Nevada	4			
Oregon	4			
South Carolina	4			
Texas	4 *			
Vermont		4		
Virginia	4			
Washington	4			
Wisconsin	4	4		4
West Virginia	4			4

* Only mentions school-to-work in relation to coordination with work force development policy.

Source: NCSL and the National School-to-Work Learning and Information Center

based learning, career exploration and connecting activities with important partners like business (Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, West Virginia).

- Passed this vision of reform and accountability into state statute. Legislative action changes the perception that these reforms are just fads that will lose steam when the next governor or state superintendent comes into office (Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, West Virginia).

Almost half the states have passed laws supporting school-to-work. Some states, such as Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii and Michigan, offer tax credits to businesses that are involved with apprenticeships or in a school-to-work partnership. Other states have apprenticeship programs that either stand alone in statute as in Georgia, Maine and Vermont or are included in other language for school-to-work as in Wisconsin. State laws also may highlight one facet of school-to-work like career academies in California and a service learning requirement for graduation in Maryland.

*Almost half
the states
have passed
laws
supporting
school-to-
work.*

Hawaii, Iowa, Montana and Wisconsin tackled the question of liability with amendments to their workers' compensation legislation. Hawaii went even further to amend the occupational safety laws for students in the workplace.

Several states also recognize the importance of linking school-to-work efforts to work force development policies. Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oregon, Texas and Wisconsin solidified this in statute by relating school-to-work policy with the state's human resource investment council.

School-to-work, or school-to-careers as it is called in some states, has also been folded into school reform efforts in Connecticut, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Michigan, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin. The long-term outlook for school-to-work in these states seems more promising because federal money generally goes only for start-up costs. Most of these states also specifically address the importance of local partnerships between schools, businesses and higher education. These states have the advantage of using all the educational money for integrating school-to-work principles in the classroom.

Some states have revisited their approaches. For example in Washington, school districts may now choose to apply for a school-to-work block grant from the state. Realizing that school reform is a long-term process, Oregon delayed the implementation of certificates of advanced mastery, to give school districts more time to find mandatory work experiences for students.

Contact for More Information

Karen Johnson
NCSL—Washington, D.C.
(202) 624-8183
karen.johnson@ncsl.org